[fic] light from darkness, thanks be to God

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Title: light from darkness, thanks be to God
Fandom: Supernatural.
Pairing: Gabriel/Castiel.
Rating: PG-13 for violence and kissing.
Word Count: 7,003 words.
Summary: Castiel returns to the Winchesters, Gabriel tries to be a warrior and not an angel, and the first battle is fought.
Notes: Sequel to Chains and Promises. I know I'll have to write a sequel to this soon, as I left a lot of plot to do, but I wanted this one done.

The Latin Castiel's speaking is the title, roughly translated. The song Dean's listening to loudly is Motorhead's Dogs of War. A lot of the plot back story comes from the Book of Enoch, except that I've butchered it into something useful for this plot. Remial is a corruption of the name Ramiel.

Also, this was written/plotted before 5x19. So that's not taken into account at all.

Feedback is appreciated!

1.

Gabriel had left hours ago, leaving Castiel to feel the thrum of Gabriel's Grace under his skin and hold his weapon. His weapon, *His* longbow. Years and years ago he had held this bow in his hands, he had cleaned it and placed it in Heaven's armory after the War.

Every angel had a weapon made specifically for them. The archangels had flaming swords. Castiel had seen lances and axes and a variety of weapons, each one fitting its owner perfectly. The short sword he had used before was simply a generic weapon all angels possessed. But the bow in his hands belonged there, and simply to see if he could, he braced his weapon. The bow string he used wasn't made from any material found on Earth, and glowed silver as he tested his draw.

It was beautiful, and it felt right in his hands.

"Lux ex tenebris...deo gratias." He couldn't help the murmured words of gratitude. He felt alive in ways he hadn't since he had come down on Earth, and with his weapon he felt hope.

A moment passed, and his cellphone went off. The familiar sound of Led Zeppelin's music played for a moment as he banished the bow string with a thought and retrieved the cellphone. He looked at the number, as Dean had taught him to do, and then opened it.

"Dean," Castiel greeted. "What do you need?"

"I'm checking up on you, Cas. Was afraid you went AWOL on us." A pause that Castiel encouraged by staying silent. "Are you alright?"

"I am fine."

"Good."

"Where are you?" Castiel had to share the news. He wanted to see some hope in their eyes, just for once. They needed it, and they had been denied it for too long.

"Hoven, South Dakota," Dean paused, and Castiel heard the rustle of keys. "Country Side Motel's Room Eleven - Woah!"

Castiel looked across the room at Dean, and closed his cellphone.

"Where did you get *that*?" Dean had noticed the longbow. He came over, looking at it, and Castiel felt the odd, old urge to hide his weapon. Human hands had never been meant to hold glory like this, and he knew Dean. Dean would want to touch, to handle, to see if it really was real.

"Gabriel upheld his promise," Castiel said, instead of 'back up, don't touch,' although he might have said it out loud, by the way Dean jerked back and was instantly suspicious.

"It's from Gabriel? You know we can't trust him!" Oh, Castiel understood Dean's reasons for suspicion. He understood the anger, as he had felt it all too keenly after the warehouse.

But things had changed. Castiel had seen that much. The stakes had gotten higher, and Gabriel had chosen a side. He had been given a rare moment of personal attention from one of Heaven's generals, while Gabriel was acting in that capacity.

"We can trust him." Castiel said, after a moment. "He cannot afford to trick us. Not now."

It hurt to see Dean bark a bitter laugh, but Castiel understood it. "That didn't stop him before."

"The situation has changed, Dean. This is no longer just about Michael and Lucifer. Gabriel can't afford to play tricks now."

"What, the Apocalypse wasn't serious enough?"

"No. Not for him to move. This is the final apocalypse, and he wants us to help him stop it."

Dean still looked skeptical, but he was listening now. "What do you mean, final?"

"If the situation had not changed, and Michael and Lucifer had fought, whatever end they brought out would have eventually changed back into Earth. A changed Earth, but it would no longer be Paradise or Hell." Castiel explained, patient. "The only way to make that situation permanent would be to involve all of the Fallen, and the entire Host. Michael has mobilized the entire Host, and they are waiting on you. Lucifer hadn't enlisted the help of the Fallen in this. But now they are moving, and Heaven hasn't seen their actions yet."

"So Gabriel's only helping out because the situation's gotten worse. Great." Dean made a face, and Castiel waited, sure Dean had more to say. "So how does he know it's gotten worse, if Heaven hasn't noticed?"

"He encountered a chain forged by Saraqael, one of the Fallen." Castiel hadn't explained that aspect of his imprisonment yet, nor would he.

Castiel knew Dean. He would want to know how to break that chain, if it was reforged and used again, and Castiel knew that Dean didn't understand the word impossible.

"Right. So, how's this supposed to help?" Dean gestured to Castiel's longbow, and Castiel could see skepticism in his eyes. There was that odd, old urge again, to hide his weapon, and Castiel could feel himself glowering. "What?" Dean had noticed, that much was clear.

He had to remind himself that Dean knew nothing of Heaven's weaponry, that he knew nothing of what the longbow was. He took a calming breath.

"This is the most powerful weapon Gabriel could have brought to me."

Dean's eyebrow went up, and he was still skeptical as he asked: "What, not a flaming sword?"

"That is Gabriel's weapon. I would not wield it as effectively as he could. Just as he would not use mine effectively." As he spoke, Castiel braced the bow again, testing the draw once more. "This was made in the Beginning, for my use alone."

And now Dean was beginning to look properly impressed. The urge to hide his longbow faded under Dean's fascinated look, which lead to a bit more show than Castiel had intended. He drew back the bow, using his preferred thumb grip to test the full extent of the bow. "Stand clear, Dean." He warned, giving Dean a moment to step back before he released. The dry fire wouldn't hurt his bow or the string, and it let him examine the force.

"Are you done showing off?" Dean said, and Castiel smiled at last. He understood that as well. It was a warm feeling, seeing Dean impressed. Castiel liked it.

"Yes."

"Why haven't you pulled this out sooner?"

"It is a weapon not meant to be used until there is war. Gabriel retrieved it from Heaven."

2.

"Gabriel went *where*?"

There was the sudden sound of wings, and then: "Heaven, kiddo. They haven't changed the locks since I was last there."

Gabriel had returned, and he had his flaming sword. The sight of it nearly caused Castiel to go to one knee. Heaven's most terrifying weapon, complete with his most powerful weapon. Nothing could withstand the force of that sword, if Gabriel swung it with the intent to destroy. *Nothing*.

Dean, however, had stared down death far too many times to be afraid of a flaming hunk of metal. He whirled at the sound of Gabriel's voice, and scowled. "You're late."

"For what? I don't see a party." Gabriel slung the sword over his shoulders, flames not bothering him or his clothes. "If you're going to rag on me for not dropping in a week ago..." He trailed off, looking at Castiel. "He is, isn't he?"

"Generally, when you decide to help someone out, you don't wait a week before doing anything." Dean said, annoyed.

"And generally, when you're preparing for war, you don't just blindly run into the battle. It's called being prepared. Motto of the boy scouts. I recommend trying it." Gabriel's tone was dry, scathing.

A tense moment passed, as glares were exchanged and words were considered. Then

Gabriel grinned and sat in a chair that hadn't been there before.

"Where's Godzilla? War Council needs to come to session." Light as the words were, Castiel knew there was weight behind them. Gabriel had a plan, and they needed to hear it. If nothing else, he would hear it and do what he was ordered.

A hand snapped in front of his nose, and Castiel focused on Gabriel, blinking. "Yes?" He had felt no power being used, but if Gabriel wanted to mask it, he was sure that Gabriel could.

"I said war council, not everyone-shut-up-and-listen-to-me-give-orders, Castiel. I have information and a plan or two, but I'm not the general here." Something in Gabriel's tone made Castiel pause, searching the archangel's eyes. "I quit that job, remember?"

"You are still - "

"No. Not anymore. Just Gabriel, Trickster with a bit of a history." Something in Gabriel's tone was pleading. That was the look in his eyes, that was the odd note.

"I understand." Castiel understood enough to let Gabriel have his way. He could feel Dean's questioning eyes on them, but more importantly he could see Gabriel searching his eyes, and he hoped Gabriel saw what he needed to see.

Castiel felt relief when Gabriel nodded and resumed his place in his chair. He snapped his fingers, and this time Castiel felt the power flare when Sam appeared in the room, holding two bags of fast food. Castiel could see his expression move from startled to curious to severely annoyed in less than five seconds.

"I was just walking from the parking lot."

"Yes, but the war council's now, so share the burgers and sit down. I've got news. News about Lucifer."

That got the burgers distributed and everyone seated in a hurry, and Gabriel leaned forward, using his sword as a chin-rest. (That earned a wince from Castiel, but it was Gabriel's weapon, and he couldn't exactly break it.)

"First of all, you two know the basic story between Michael and Lucifer, so I'll skip that. But the other Fallen - well, at least the ones who we're seeing now - they Fell for a few different reasons." Gabriel looked at Castiel, then back at the Winchesters. "They were the original angels who were sent to keep an eye on humans, way back in the beginning. Problem was, they had been taking Dad's order a bit too far. We're supposed to respect and bow to you humans, and Lucifer didn't. These angels did the opposite, and had kids with you humans. Following me so far?"

Castiel had gotten very quiet, recalling the history, but Sam was nodding, and Gabriel wasn't about to give Dean a chance for a sarcastic remark.

"Dad didn't like that. He hadn't made us to make hybrids, and you could see the proof of that by how imbalanced they got. Sad, really. Dad didn't mind angels being in love and all, but he didn't want any grand kids. So Michael got to seal the parents, and we got to do cleanup."

Castiel didn't say: Brother, you were the one who cleaned up. You killed their children.

"Now, if anyone would like to guess how long the seals on these Fallen were supposed to last?" Gabriel looked attentive, waiting for the class to catch up.

"Apocalypse?" Sam ventured.

"Correct! And because they weren't wandering around, I thought Lucifer was pulling his prison break early again. Sunday dinner, boys, Sunday dinner." Gabriel shook his head, slowly. "Except that they're free, which means it's the real one this time."

He let the silence last after that one, and Dean spoke up.

"So what do we do about it?"

"We're going to stuff them back in their cages, and wind this Apocalypse back down. At least, Castiel and I are going to. You two just need to keep saying no." The Winchesters opened their mouths. "Ah ah ah! Neither one of you could take one of us in combat, not without a serious trap and some holy oil, and this is going to require more than a few knife fights." Gabriel glanced at Castiel. "How'd you get through those, by the way?"

"With difficulty. I spent time learning human techniques to make up for my lack of proficiency."

"I'll teach you some melee techniques later." Gabriel waved a hand. "Right, a few more things, then I can drag you off again." He snapped his fingers, then snapped them again, a cellphone appearing in his hand. "Your carvings have been adjusted so that Castiel and I can find you. And your cellphones have me as a contact. Don't abuse it."

He stood, ignoring the Winchesters again, focusing on Castiel. "Time to go, Brother. We're paying Remial a visit."

3.

As they flew to find the Fallen archangel Remial, Gabriel couldn't help but shoot annoyed glances at Castiel. Well. Not so much as at Castiel, but rather at the painful memories Castiel's presence reminded him of.

He didn't want to be a general again, archangel or not. Dealing with this sort of thing on a regular basis? Brr. He *liked* his freedom. Part of why he'd quit in the first place.

So if he smote any of the Fallen a little more than he meant to, well, that was well within his rights. They'd dragged him into it again, after all.

Speaking of the Fallen, Remial had always been an arrogant little bugger. That had been how Gabriel had found him so quickly, once he had known where to look. For being known for his visions and his talent with weather, he was easy to find.

Then again, none of the Fallen were expecting angelic resistance so soon. Gabriel was depending on that as he led his soldier north, to Canada. The borders of nations meant little, but it was a convenient way to name locations. Gabriel smirked to himself, stopping briefly in an open field to give Castiel a more complete run-down on the guy.

He turned, watching Castiel land, then gave him a few seconds before kissing him again. Castiel startled, but Gabriel had to give him credit for not jumping back this time. He grinned and let his Grace touch Castiel's, filling up the dark spots again and brightening Castiel all over. When he leaned back, Castiel was as good as new again.

"We'll have to get you a new source of Grace, kiddo. Since you can't walk the White Plains at the moment, I'll have to share some of my sources," Gabriel couldn't resist the friendly elbow to Castiel's side, and the wink. It was to cover the worry, as what exactly did the angels up in Heaven know about Earth these days, if their agents on Earth didn't know about the holy places to recharge Grace?

Probably Zachariach's idea, he thought. Keep 'em ignorant, and keep a tight leash of 'em. While he had removed Zachariah from his list of people to interrogate while visiting Heaven and finding the Fallen, the thought made him put Zachariah back on. Arrogant

bastard, and he wasn't even a warrior.

But that was a matter for later, and right now he needed to explain what he remembered of Remial. Castiel was still silent, clearly uncomfortable with the situation, even as glimpses of awe and hope slipped out.

"We're just here to injure Remial," Gabriel said, summoning his sword with a snap of his fingers. Again he saw that fear and awe in Castiel's eyes, and yes, it was nice to know his sword could pull out those reactions, even in allies. Tricksters didn't often inspire awe, and why yes he was going to enjoy at least that in this situation. "Do you recall anything about him?"

"I do," Castiel said, voice going quieter. "My garrison was one of the four at his sealing."

"Ah, good. I can skip explaining who he is and all. We're not going to reseal him, I don't think. Just injure him enough that he won't be of much use up here. I'll draw him out, and I want you to provide cover fire. And use this," Gabriel drew a symbol in the air, watching Castiel's face as he repeated it a few times. "Bind it to your arrows, and that way you can't hurt me with them."

"I've never seen Enochian used like that..." Castiel said quietly, tracing the symbols on his own, memorizing them.

"I came up with it on my own, since I've been down here. Spend any time in France or England when they were using arrows, and you'd want some way to protect yourself." Gabriel waved a hand, casual. "I can't keep it drawn and working if I'm to fight, so make sure you've got it settled in."

Castiel nodded, tracing the symbol one more time. "I understand."

"Good, then. Here, have a chill-pill before we go." And Gabriel snapped his fingers, a snickersbar appearing in Castiel's free hand. Once Castiel opened it and took a tentative bite, Gabriel grinned and leaned on his sword, bringing another chocolate bar to his hands with another snap.

There was no way he was going to battle without being on a proper sugar high, and hey! Dinner *and* a show. Castiel looked like he was in Heaven's jacuzzi section, otherwise known as bliss.

Ooo, that sound was a buzz to the groin. Apparently chocolate made Castiel moan, too. Gabriel eyed Castiel, considering. He liked the taste of Castiel's kisses. He liked the taste of chocolate. It wasn't difficult to add two plus two, nor was it a hard choice, and soon he was leaning in to give Castiel a proper kiss, with lots of tongue and chocolate-stealing.

He leaned back, licking his lips, enjoying Castiel's confused look. He just grinned and returned his attentions to his chocolate.

"Gabriel," and now Castiel had to ask. Of course. "Why did you - "

Gabriel cut him off, lifting the chocolate. "I wanted to try your chocolate. Relax, this may be the last chance we have for something like this for a while."

Castiel looked at the chocolate bar in his hand, then at the same kind of chocolate in Gabriel's hand, then at Gabriel, eyes questioning. Gabriel sighed.

"I also wanted another kiss, okay? No biggie."

"...as you say, Gabriel," Castiel said after a moment, but there was another question in his eyes, and his fingers were on his lips.

Gabriel, however, didn't want to get into it. Castiel was sweet, was innocent in ways that Gabriel hadn't encountered in years, and yes, okay, maybe he was attracted. Not that they needed to deal with that now, of course. So he finished his chocolate and picked his sword up again, causing the flames to flare. "Okay, wartime. Ready?"

Castiel nodded, and Gabriel made their wrappers vanish, and then they flew again.

4.

There was no time to even try to pull a trick. Just enough time to hope that Castiel would use his new trick properly, and just enough time to hope that Remial wouldn't get lucky. Gabriel landed on the frosty plain, a fair distance away from Remial. There was the flutter of wings, and then Castiel was next to him, quickly bracing his weapon.

Gabriel watched Remial, examining the tall - too tall - archangel approach them. Most of the Fallen were too tall, Gabriel remembered, and now that they required vessels to walk Earth, well. Remial was arrogant, and even with the tall black fellow he was wearing, Gabriel could see torn flesh and muscle where Remial had forced an extra foot of bone into his legs and arms. Grotesque, but that was to be expected. No, what bothered Gabriel were Remial's eyes.

As the Fallen archangel got closer, Gabriel pinpointed why he was bothered. There were angry red scars over each eye, forcing them shut, and the drawing of an eye over each scar. It was unnatural, and Gabriel didn't want to think of the pain.

"Who's there?" Remial asked, a large sword appearing in his hands. "There are three of you. I want your names."

"They *blinded* you?" Gabriel couldn't keep the surprise from his voice.

Remial straightened, the sound of tearing and bones breaking as his finger-bones extended and sharpened into claws, and Gabriel could see broken and *wrong* Enochian written on his bones. "Gabriel," Remial hissed. "You won't live long, child-killer!"

Gabriel brought his sword up to block the sudden spring from Remial, and he forced his Grace into two Enochian symbols for protection and withstanding evil, and still he felt his sword shudder at the contact.

Then Remial was swinging his other hand at him, and Gabriel was forced to jump back, barely missing the swing.

"Not blind, not blind!" Remial chanted, darting forward, wings manifesting to move him along faster towards Gabriel, who was rapidly drawing more sigils in the air, binding them to himself and his blade as quickly as he could. Then he gripped his sword and braced himself for impact -

It never came. There was a shining arrow in Remial's side, and more followed, peppering Remial's wings. Remial staggered back, in pain, and Gabriel moved in, summoning more Grace to him, causing the air around them to crackle as he swung his sword.

The fires turned Remial's skin black, and then the edge caught, and then Remial's legs were gone, flying through the air. Gabriel didn't give Remial a chance to fall, and adjusted his aim, and one of Remial's wings was severed.

Remial screamed, and the Enochian on him broke and shivered off, gone without Grace to bind it there. He fell back on the ground, still screaming, and Gabriel stepped back, watching for any counter attacks. "We're leaving. *Now*!" He heard the flutter of Castiel's wings and manifested his. "Remember this, Remial: I *didn't kill you*."

Gabriel took to the sky, leaving Remial behind. Castiel was waiting, bless him, and

wordlessly Gabriel turned south, flying for the Winchesters. Castiel followed, and Gabriel could just hear the unasked questions. He sighed to himself and descended, landing in an abandoned parking lot. A moment, and then Castiel was with him.

"Gabriel," Castiel started, but Gabriel turned, still gripping his sword. He fell silent.

"I killed his children because *God commanded it.*" Gabriel said, gripping the sword tightly. The sigils were vanishing as Gabriel let them go, but even so Gabriel could see the tenseness in Castiel's expression. "I killed all of their children because of God. I would *do it again* if God commanded it."

Castiel nodded, and Gabriel exhaled, understanding why Castiel breathed. It was calming. And he needed that right now. He ran a shaky hand through his hair, banishing his sword at last.

"Castiel." He was calmer now, focusing on the other matters at hand. "Good job with your shots. You saved me from a lot of damage."

At that Castiel straightened, and Gabriel could see the shock in his eyes. "Damage? How?"

"Saraqael's sharing secrets," Gabriel said, flatly. "His *bones* were etched with Enochian meant to hurt other angels. I couldn't have blocked all of his blows, not when he also had sigils that could have sealed my sword, with enough power. Your shots were what stopped a long, bloody fight back there."

That brought silence, and Gabriel understood that. Remial had once been one of their brothers, and to see him like that, with power enough to bring out a drawn out battle?

"This just got harder," Gabriel muttered, snapping his fingers and summoning a chocolate bar. He needed the comfort it brought, and he needed to keep his hands busy. "I'm going to have *words* with Saraqael when we find him."

Castiel was silent for a moment, giving the ground a far too intense stare. Then he looked back up at him, in the eyes. "Gabriel, we must succeed." There was far too much intensity and gravitas in his eyes and words, and for a moment Gabriel was taken aback.

Then he had to chuckle, after a moment. "We will, Castiel. We will."

When he looked at Castiel again, there was hope in his eyes, and oh yes, he liked that. Especially since Castiel really was useful in battle. (Small, questioning doubts, but easily banished.)

Castiel nodded, and once again Gabriel thought of Castiel's priority of things to ask about. He was moving down the list, that much was clear.

"Remial said that there were three of us."

Ah yes. Blind, but still able to sense beings, and he was able to count. Gabriel waved a hand. "He can sense anyone. Part of the visions package, even if he took out his eyes."

"Then who did he sense?"

"Me, you, and my vessel. Probably assumed my vessel was working with us, because he's not a standard vessel."

Castiel frowned, and again there was the unasked question. He had probably assumed that Gabriel had a human vessel, just like he had his.

"Relax, kiddo. I'll tell you." Gabriel grinned, trusting. "But you can't tell anyone else,

okay?"

"Why?"

"Because of who he is."

"I understand. I will not tell."

"Good, good." Gabriel waved a hand over his face. "This is Coyote, Trickster from North America."

5.

Gabriel could have laughed as he saw the emotions and thoughts flicker across Castiel's face. He was so open, at least to him, and no wonder he liked the angel.

He took another bite from his chocolate bar as Castiel came up with his first question: "We do not take Tricksters as vessels."

"Usually, yeah, but if I took my intended human vessel, Heaven would've found me easily. And you've seen what happens if an archangel takes a vessel not meant for them." The decaying state of Lucifer's vessel was familiar to them both. "So I worked out a deal with Coyote."

"How?"

"I got his consent. I'll tell you the details later." Gabriel shrugged. "C'mon, I'll bet you want to brag to the Winchesters about our victory."

He didn't give Castiel a chance to say anything else as he took to the sky again.

After a moment, he felt Castiel trailing after him, and after the miles faded under them, they landed in the backseat of the Impala.

Gabriel loved this part. Dean didn't slam on the brakes, but Gabriel could see the tense line of his jaw as he contemplated staking the archangel again.

"Staking wouldn't actually work on me, haven't you figured that out already?" Mind reading was great for teasing.

"Yeah, but it'd hurt like hell for you."

"True," Gabriel shrugged. "But that don't mean you should. One of the Fallen is missing some limbs now, thanks to me and Castiel here."

"You didn't kill them?" Sam asked, curious.

"No, no, of course not! I said we were sending them back to their prisons, Sammy, not indiscriminately murdering them." Gabriel took a bite of his chocolate, then continued. "I ruined his vessel and ripped off a wing, is all. He can't recover from that, even with help, not before he's forced to leave Earth."

"Ripped off a wing." Sam repeated. "You two vanish for half an hour and you rip off an archangel's *wing*." His voice had gotten quiet, and yes, Gabriel could see him paling. Well, there was the inspired fear. He was good at fear these days.

"That's about right. All in a day's work," Gabriel said, far too cheerful. He spotted Castiel's look, warning him that he could see right through the false cheeriness, but he shrugged and dug back into his chocolate.

There was silence for a moment, and then Dean had to ask.

"What now? You two go attack another angel?"

Gabriel really didn't like that tone. Really, *really* didn't like it. It set off all of his Trickster alarms, and instinct almost had him giving the human a lesson before he caught himself. He narrowed his eyes, readying a scathing reply, but there was Castiel, answering.

"I believe Gabriel needs to find several artifacts that will assist us with our next battle," Castiel said, and Gabriel could have choked on his chocolate. "If we are to fight Saraqael, we will need Holy Oil."

They hadn't even discussed it, and he couldn't protest here, and oh, Castiel was a sneaky little angel. Gabriel could have marveled at the audacity Castiel had, to give him orders like this, and he could have smote Castiel for the sheer gall of it, but no. He was right about the Holy Oil, even if they didn't find Saraqael next, and so Gabriel took to flight again, laughing freely in the open skies.

Gabriel snapped his fingers, giving Castiel a chocolate bar, and flew for the Middle East.

"Candy? Seriously?"

Castiel examined the chocolate bar that had appeared in his hand, and felt relieved. "He is pleased with me. Remial could have injured him, if I had not distracted Remial." Tell one truth to avoid another, yes. Angels did not lie, not directly.

"Cas," Sam started. "He's really not tricking us?"

"He is not." Castiel said, firm. "He has shared his Grace with me. I watched him fight. I fought with him. Remial recognized him as the slayer of the Nephilim, and he would be unable to mistake anything else for Gabriel. Gabriel is not tricking us. He would not dare to."

"Wait," Sam said. "Castiel. The story he told us, about these Fallen - I looked it up."

"Then you have read portions of the Book of Enoch." Castiel said. "Portions of it are true. I fought with my brothers against the Fallen, and I was there at the sealing of Remial." Castiel did not say that he had seen the infanticide committed by Gabriel at their Father's command, nor that his Garrison had been among several that Gabriel had used to prevent any of the Nephilim from escaping.

He did not mention that he had allowed a mother, heavy with child, to escape. It had been out of pity, and only a few of his brothers and sisters from that garrison knew, as they had helped him, and among them Uriel was dead, and Anael was broken.

"Are you going to tell us which portions are true?" Sam asked, and Castiel shook his head.

"No," he said. "It is Gabriel's story to tell. Not mine." Gabriel had received his orders from God himself, and Castiel had not. Gabriel had led an army in the fight, and Castiel had not.

Dean navigated the Impala through a tricky section on the highway and glanced at Castiel. "Anything useful you can tell us?"

"The banishing sigil may not work on the Fallen." Castiel said. "Your best option, if you encounter them, is to escape. And *call* me, or Gabriel."

"Great, just great. Run and call the parents, right."

Castiel heard the exasperation. He understood it. But he could see no other way for the Winchesters to fight the Fallen. He recalled the distortions Remial had forced on his vessel and leaned forward. "Dean. This is not a matter to be taken lightly."

"Yeah, yeah. I know." Dean waved a hand. "If there's trouble I'll call. Right."

Sam shrugged helplessly at Castiel as Dean turned on the radio, and Motorhead roared out of the speakers. Castiel closed his eyes for a moment, listening, and then he took to the sky, but the sound of wings was lost in the sound of guitars.

Stand or fall, live or die (Stand)
Strong and true to the end (Now)
Fly the flag, let them see (Sky)
We will never bend the knee (Don't fail)
We are the last of all (Here)
If we give way we lose (No)
So can you stand with me? (We can)
Will you now pay your dues (Hai)

The tales they tell, of how we stand this day
We that defend our cause
Will last a thousand years
Come now the dogs of war

6.

Jerusalem was arid. Gabriel really didn't like the place, but it was one of the few places left on earth that had Holy Oil. Not that he liked Holy Oil, either, but that was a different issue altogether.

He had collected it, but instead of returning to North America immediately, he instead took a moment to walk the city. Jerusalem was busy with people, tourists and believers and *people*, all busy with conflicts in their own lives. It was easy to fade into the crowd and drift, too easy to lose himself in the mass of humanity. The noise of conversation and prayer was nearly overwhelming, and Gabriel had to stop for a moment to admire it. This was why he had thrown his lot in with the Winchesters and Castiel. This noisy, busy mass of people, some bad, some good, all free to make their own choices.

Gabriel liked it. This, if anything, helped keep his faith strong through the years, as well as supporting his conviction that Heaven wasn't a place he wanted to return to.

He looked around a final time, and began to walk. Getting into the city was easy, as was leaving, provided you didn't mind a little walk. There were too many people everywhere not to see him vanishing, and that was a can of worms he didn't want to deal with. Grace could have hidden him, but Gabriel wasn't willing to leave the city's atmosphere yet. So: walk in and out of the city, like a proper pilgrim.

He was at the Lions' Gate when he felt Castiel approaching, and a quick exertion of Grace provided a hidden place for Castiel to land, as well as a private flare to him. Castiel appeared seconds later with the sound of wings, and Gabriel eased the illusion away, making Castiel's appearance seem normal.

"Heya, Castiel."

"Gabriel," Castiel said, carefully. He still had the chocolate bar in his hand, and he was probably nervous about Gabriel's reaction to his trick from earlier.

"I believe we were going to need this?" Gabriel said, holding up the jug. "Or were you just trying to get some alone time with Dean?"

"I apologize," Castiel said, and Gabriel had to roll his eyes.

"Forget about it. I took some time to see the sights, and hey, this the *Lions'* Gate. Way better than the Dung Gate, I'll tell you that." Gabriel grinned, tapping the wall. Castiel gave him one of this confused looks, and Gabriel had to laugh at that. "Here, here, I'll get serious. Before we get into another fight, I want you to have a little more firepower available."

"You have given me my weapon," Castiel said, giving Gabriel one of his searching stares. "What could be more powerful than that in my hands?"

"Nothing. But if you learn how to use your blade properly, that'll put us both in a better position." Gabriel summoned a replica of Castiel's sword to his hand and held it out, testing the balance. "Castiel, this is a fake, and after we find a private place to practice, you're going to try and stab me with it."

The look on Castiel's face was priceless, and Gabriel could have laughed again, except that fake or not it was going to hurt when he got Castiel to stab him. Not that he'd be hurt for long: the second the fake was withdrawn he'd be healed instantly, and there was no way it'd kill him for good.

"I cannot attempt to harm you," Castiel said, and Gabriel shook his head.

"No, you're going to try, and try hard. Otherwise I'll stab *you*," with this, Gabriel had another fake blade in his hands, "and trust me, it'll hurt. You're going to learn somehow, and who better than me to learn from?"

He put one of the swords in Castiel's hands. "Follow me. We're going somewhere private." A temporary illusion to hide their vanishing act, and he flew. He felt Castiel follow him, and soon they landed in an empty field in North America. If Gabriel remembered his states' names correctly (and he did) it was Montana.

The moment Castiel landed, Gabriel launched himself at him, sword at the ready, and it was only Castiel's instinctive dive to the side and Gabriel's slowed speed that saved him from a nasty stab wound.

"You're going to have to fight back, Castiel." Gabriel held up the sword. "We're not stopping until you've gotten me at least once."

Castiel nodded, and readied his sword, expression getting more serious. More like that of a soldier, and Gabriel rewarded it by shifting his stance into one with an open spot in his guard. His speed would make up for any holes in his defense, but it would give Castiel somewhere to start with.

As expected, Castiel lunged, and Gabriel could see all of the flaws in Castiel's attack. Overextended reach, off-balance stance - Gabriel easily side-stepped the lunge and pushed at Castiel's back, sending him to the ground. "Don't get off balance, or I'll cut you," Gabriel said, letting Castiel stand back up. He smirked, and circled Castiel, watching him.

Castiel was watching him, too, so Gabriel abruptly darted to Castiel's left, keeping his blade low, ready when Castiel moved away, to the side, and there was a bone-jarring thud when Gabriel slammed his blade into Castiel's.

"Hey, good block!" He hadn't been expecting that, so maybe Castiel was better than he thought. Oh, he hoped so. Teaching had never been one of his skills, not even back in the days where he might've used it.

Castiel pushed forward, angling his blade to pierce, and Gabriel shook his head as he got

himself in and stabbing Castiel first.

"Can't leave yourself open like that, bro." Gabriel touched Castiel's wrist and pushed it down as he stepped back. "Painful, right?"

"Yes."

"Good, remember that. You're supposed to stab me, not get yourself hurt some more." Gabriel wiped some of Jimmy Novak's blood off of his knife and smiled, dodging Castiel's attack as he did so.

"You can't attack from the front, brother. We can all see that, and avoid it."

Castiel growled, low in his throat, and Gabriel raised his eyebrows to see something like amusement in his eyes.

"Is something funny?"

"No," Castiel said, and he moved forward again, repeating the same move. Gabriel side-stepped it, but there was a flash of pain as the blade sank into his side.

Gabriel stopped and looked down, and Castiel stepped back, leaving the blade there.

"I'm paying attention, brother."

When Gabriel looked at him, Castiel was smiling.

7.

Gabriel had withdrawn the blade and tossed it back after a moment, and then he had set to testing Castiel again. There were no pulled punches, and no handicaps, and many more stab and slash wounds that healed within seconds.

They fought until the next day, and as the hours passed from bright day to dark night to dawn again, Gabriel could see an improvement in Castiel's form and movements. He could still defeat Castiel, but it was taking more effort than it had at first. Castiel hadn't won his initial fights simply through luck: he was smart, and knew how to create new attacks and feints on the spot.

As the sun began to crawl up towards noon, Gabriel finally dropped his weapon. "We're stopping, Castiel."

Castiel examined him carefully, then dropped his weapon as well, and the blades vanished.

"Not bad for a novice, I'd say." Gabriel snapped his fingers and sat in one of the two recliners he had summoned. A parasol was summoned as well, and Gabriel gestured to the empty chair. "Have a seat."

Castiel paused, then did so. As soon as he was seated, Gabriel had the seat recline. He grinned at Castiel's startled look, then sipped from the margarita he had in his hands. "So, when were you going to tell me?"

Castiel looked at him, still tense. "Tell you what?"

"That you're smarter than you look," Gabriel said, keeping his eyes on Castiel. He saw Castiel open his mouth, ready to protest, and the recliners were suddenly close enough for him to put a finger on Castiel's lips. "First of all, you're not dead or human despite Heaven's and Hell's efforts of putting you down. Second, you're trusted by the notoriously difficult Winchester brothers. Third, you not only got to give me an order, but you also

stabbed me when I wasn't expecting you to. You've gone beyond luck, bro. You've got mad skills."

Castiel blinked at him, and if Gabriel didn't know him better, he could have sworn that Castiel was thinking *yeah, and?* at him. But he knew Castiel, and that had him swinging himself out of his recliner and straddling Castiel on his, matching Castiel's stare with his own. Castiel's vessel had lovely blue eyes, but it was Castiel's overly-serious confusion that had him kissing Castiel again.

No chocolate this time, no Grace, just lips to tongue to mouth. This was a taste that Gabriel wanted to get to know better. This was an angel he wanted to get to know better, as he was a lot more interesting than any of his Brothers and Sisters upstairs.

Castiel wasn't protesting the kiss, but Gabriel could see the questions in his eyes, so he leaned back earlier than he wanted to.

"Gabriel," Castiel said, not moving his gaze from Gabriel's eyes. "Why are you doing this?"

There were so many ways to dodge that question that Gabriel told the truth.

"Because, Castiel, you fascinate me. And I like you." Gabriel smiled and kissed Castiel again, wondering if Castiel believed him.

Probably not. Who'd believe a Trickster, after all? He closed his eyes at this kiss, focusing on feeling it, and so he felt it when Castiel put his hands on Gabriel's arms.

Castiel kissed back, moving his tongue against Gabriel's, and Gabriel moaned into Castiel's mouth. That was more than he'd ever expected from this kiss right here and now.

Castiel broke the kiss this time, neither one of them breathing now. "Does the Trickster or the Archangel want to kiss me?"

That. Everything stopped for a moment, Gabriel staring down at the angel he couldn't kill, not if he wanted a reliable ally for this too-important war, not this angel he *liked* -

He didn't bother to hide the anger as he put his hands around Castiel's neck, and Castiel simply lied there, blue eyes staring at him. That intense stare never went away, that mind was constantly working -

Gabriel stopped himself with a bitter laugh. He let go of Castiel and tilted his head back, laughing.

"How are you still alive, Castiel?" He asked, unable to keep from laughing. He couldn't say what he was laughing at, he couldn't say why he was still laughing. "How?"

Castiel reached up, putting a hand on the back of Gabriel's neck, and Gabriel let himself be pulled down for another kiss. It was harder, this time, and Castiel took the lead with the licking, but Gabriel found he didn't mind.

"You're learning, aren't you," Gabriel murmured, once Castiel was done kissing him again, and he was answered by a smile.